

Completion Report for USDA Block Grant on Specialty Crops and Promotion of Agriculture – Grant Number USDA-124

“Tri State Horticultural Growers Conference”

The grant for \$10,000 was awarded to Historic Hoosier Hills RC&D to help fund the Tri State Horticultural Growers Conference. The conference, called the **Tri State Farm Marketing Conference** when it happened, was held February 25 and 26, 2003 at the Holiday Inn Lakeview in Clarksville, Indiana. The conference was regarded as highly successful by all measures. It was developed by many partners from Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio and was attended by about 200 participants. The goal was to create an awareness of the various types of specialty enterprises available for farm families in the region. It focused particularly on the need for market research, identifying the market potential, and how to connect with the markets before entering into a specialty venture. Over 70% of the attendees were from Indiana, and over 20% from Kentucky. A copy of the list of registrants is attached (attachment #1). We also had 9 registered exhibitors and a list of those is attached also (attachment #2).

This grant was the primary funding source for the conference, and also provided the stimulus to proceed with the planning of such a large event. It was pivotal to the success of this initiative.

Partners who worked for over a year to plan the conference include: Purdue Cooperative Extension Service; Southern Indiana Rural Development Project (SIRDP); Jennings County Growers Cooperative; Town of St Leon, Indiana; Southeastern Indiana Small Business Development Center; USDA Rural Development (Indiana); Indiana Farm Bureau; Historic Hoosier Hills; the Commodity Growers Cooperative; Kentucky Cooperative Development Center; Kentucky Department of Agriculture; Kentucky Farm Bureau; and the Ohio Cooperative Development Center.

Financial sponsors include: Indiana Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture; USDA Rural Development (Indiana); Hoosier Rural Energy Electric Cooperative; Indiana Farm Bureau; the Commodity Growers Cooperative; Kentucky Farm Bureau; Kentucky Department of Agriculture; Kentucky Farmers Union; Heifer International (Kentucky); Kentucky Cooperative Development Center; and the Ohio Cooperative Development Center. A copy of the final budget is also attached (attachment #3) along with an analysis of the budget submitted with this grant (following paragraph). Total financial outlay for the conference was \$14,258.66, but this does not include expenses picked up by partners that didn't go through the Historic Hoosier Hills accounting process. That figure coupled with in-kind donations makes the final cost of the conference \$20,005.99.

In the proposed budget, we committed to raising \$2500 in cash match – we raised \$8000 from sponsors. We committed to raising \$5424 in in-kind, and actually secured \$5647.33. In-kind came from speaker expenses picked up by USDA Rural Development (\$1336.20) and by the Ohio Cooperative Development Center (\$1753.44); also supplies

and postage provided for promotional mailings in Kentucky by the West Kentucky Corporation (\$272.69); staff time by SDG Consultants (\$1500); and audio-visual equipment provided by partners that did not have to be rented from the hotel (value of \$785.00) This totals \$5647.33. In addition, a producer, Natalie Allison (“Amazing Acres”) donated the centerpiece decorations for all the tables in the banquet room – we have no value on that expense.

Sponsor contributions include: Hoosier Energy \$2000; Indiana Farm Bureau \$2000; Kentucky Department of Agriculture \$1000; Commodity Growers Cooperative \$1000; Kentucky Farm Bureau \$1000; USDA Rural Development \$500; Kentucky Farmers Union \$250 and Heifer International \$250.

Cash outlay for the conference was primarily for the hotel facilities and for promotion. The Holiday Inn facility bill came to \$8722.66. The next highest outlay was to reimburse Strategic Development Group (SDG) for the banners, brochure printing, paper, folders handed out at the conference, postage, etc – this came to \$3572.70. Keynote speaker Ed Bell was the next highest expense at \$1379.40 for speaker fees, mileage and lodging. A copy of the Quickbooks financial account for the conference is attached (attachment #4). Copies of all bills are on file in the Historic Hoosier Hills office and are available for review at any time.

We will end up with a carryover of approximately \$7500 from this conference – it will be used to seed the 2004 conference that is already in the planning stages for February 2004 in the area of the Cincinnati Airport in northern Kentucky. Kentucky partners have agreed to host the conference and the long-term goal is to make this conference an annual event with the 2005 conference in Ohio. Efforts are already underway to add partners (Extension from Kentucky and Ohio, other RC&D’s from those two states, Ohio Farm Bureau, etc). With this first success, it will be easier to secure additional partners, sponsors, exhibitors, etc.

Participants also rated the conference as a success, and a copy of the summary of evaluations is attached (attachment #5). Although the conference was rated on a number of factors, the overall rating was a 4.4 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being lowest and 5 being the highest rating. Comments from participants will be used to guide the development of future conference programs. A copy of the conference folder showing speakers and topics is also enclosed.